

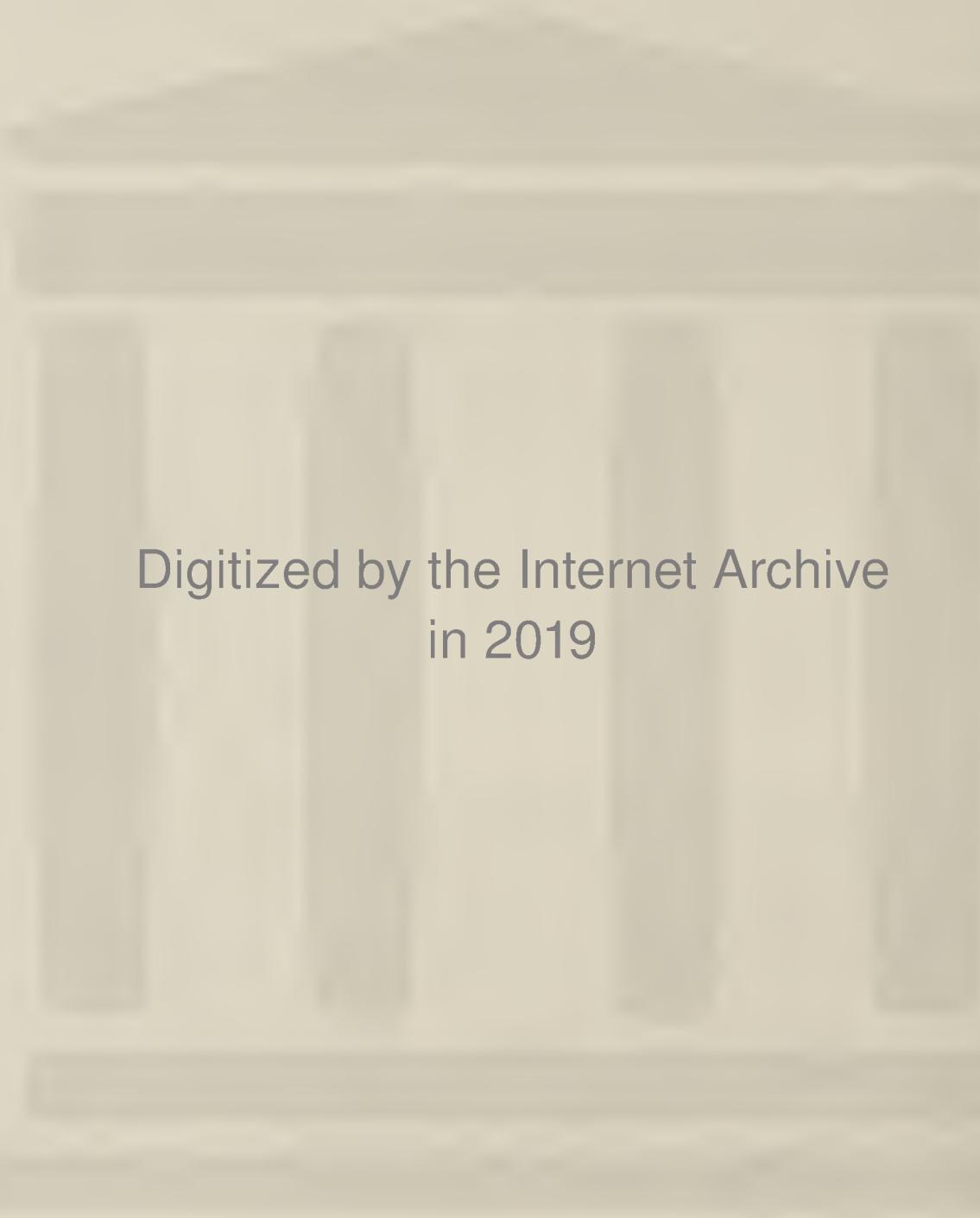
IN OLD OTSEGO

by

Roy L. Butterfield



1959



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2019

<https://archive.org/details/inoldotsegonewyo00butt>

ALLEN COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY



3 1833 06843 1987

GC
974.701
OT8BU

IN OLD OTSEGO

A NEW YORK COUNTY VIEWS ITS PAST

by

Roy L. Butterfield

OTSEGO COUNTY HISTORIAN

with

A BIBLIOGRAPHY
OF COUNTY REFERENCES

1959

This Printing Authorized
by Otsego County Board of
Supervisors, 1959

Printed by
The Freeman's Journal Co
Cooperstown, N. Y.
1959

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	v
INTRODUCTION	vi
THE GENESIS OF OTSEGO COUNTY	1
OTSEGO'S EARLY POPULATION	5
GEORGE CROGHAN AND OTSEGO COUNTY	8
WILLIAM COOPER, COLONIZER	12
DOCUMENT—JACOB MORRIS	15
DR. NATHANIEL GOTTL	17
A TRANSPORTATION STORY	20
IMPROVING THE MIND	24
OTSEGO IN OHIO	27
NOTABLE NATIVE SONS	30
OTSEGO WRITERS	34
GOLD RUSH DAYS	37
RICHFIELD'S MINERAL SPRINGS	42
OTSEGO MISCELLANY	45
ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO IN 1859	51
BIBLIOGRAPHY	55

PREFACE

THE MEMBERS of the Otsego County Committee on Historic Observances take pleasure in publishing in book form the interesting series of articles prepared by County Historian, Mr. Roy L. Butterfield, on the early history of our County. This series of articles was published weekly in all of the newspapers of the County during the summer and fall months of this year. 1959 was designated by the Legislature as "New York's Year of History."

The Committee members were of the opinion that Mr. Butterfield's articles contain very important Otsego County Historical material that should be preserved for posterity, put together in permanent book form and copies placed in all of the libraries, the schools and other institutions of the County. Hence, they requested of the members of the Otsego County Board of Supervisors an appropriation for this purpose. The request was granted and sincere thanks and gratitude are hereby expressed to this honorable body.

Generous thanks and congratulations are also extended to Mr. Butterfield for his scholarly and painstaking study and research that made possible the rich material presented in this volume.

H. Claude Hardy, Chairman
Mrs. Port Ferris, Vice Chairman
Robert A. Harlem, Secretary
Otsego County Committee on
Historic Observances.

Cooperstown, New York
December 29, 1959

INTRODUCTION

THE DESIGNATION of 1959 as New York's Year of History, with every community in the state urged to aid in its observance, afforded a favorable opportunity to bring to attention items of importance in the history of Otsego County. Accordingly, the material presented here was prepared and is offered as a part of this county's participation in the whole project.

The fifteen chapters do not lend themselves to arrangement in a chronological sequence. Topics were selected primarily because at hand was information upon them which previously had been mentioned little, if at all, in works devoted to the local scene. As an example, small comment has heretofore been made in print on the enviable place held by this county in the literary field, and so with many of the other subjects.

As they stand, these articles have necessarily been greatly condensed. Each could readily fill much more space. Also other topics of likely appeal to current readers and of value in future research could well have had a place, but this volume can be only a sampling of the extensive and interesting history of the area.

These contributions may be helpful to teachers and pupils in our schools and to others who have need or desire to pursue our local history. I hope this number is legion. A further hope is that in the following pages can be found cause for satisfaction—and even pride—in the record of Otsego County.

Hartwick, N. Y.
December 29, 1959

Roy L. Butterfield
Otsego County Historian

THE GENESIS OF OTSEGO COUNTY

WHEN white men first came into the Otsego region the territory now covered by the county belonged to the Mohawk Indians. It was not included under the charter given by King James II of England to the Duke of York in 1664, as that instrument reads, "all the land from the west side of Connectecutte River to the East side of the De la Ware Bay," even if these may be construed to have reached to the utmost heads of those waters. Any British claim there was still shadowy when the Province of New York was divided into counties in 1683, Albany to include all the province north of Dutchess and Ulster Counties. The next year Onondaga and Cayuga sachems stated "That they have put themselves and their lands under the Protection of the King, and have given the Susquehanna River to the Government of New York of which they desire it may be a Branch, and under which they will shelter themselves from the French." This would properly pertain to regions farther south and west than Otsego, as the real Indian owners there are not mentioned. However, as early as 1704 the Mohawks began to convey their lands to white men and in 1736 this trend first affected present Otsego County. By 1761 150,000 acres there had been thus transferred and a small settlement had been in existence at Cherry Valley for two decades. With the session of Canada to England in 1763, every one in New York was safe from the French. The frontier line could soon move to the "Line of Property," set at the Ft. Stanwix treaty in 1768 to separate the areas of white and Indian occupation. This line, so far as it need be traced here, ran from the confluence of the Canada and Wood Creeks (somewhat west of the City of Rome) to the source of the west branch of the Unadilla River, the whole length of that stream, then overland to the north-east corner of Pennsylvania. Almost at once thereafter the remaining Otsego lands were almost entirely taken up and settlements were begun on them in a dozen or more places. Local government facilities nearer at hand than Albany were now needed.

On March 12, 1772 Tryon County was erected, named for the colonial governor at the time and taking from Albany all its territory west of a point on the Mohawk River which is now the south-east

corner of Montgomery County. This action was followed twelve days later by a division of the new county into districts, a district corresponding to a present town. The two westernmost districts abutted on the Line of Property and were separated by the Mohawk River. By some mischance, the two names chosen, Kingsland and German Flats, were interchanged in the statute. This was corrected the next year. German Flats was the district on the south bank. The name derived from the Palatines who had been encouraged to settle there much earlier as a buffer against the French. The eastern boundary was a north-south line drawn through Little Falls, thus almost touching Hyde Bay on Otsego Lake, Southward the district extended, as then hazily expressed, "to the limits of this colony" and so included the larger part of present Otsego County. Canajoharie was the district formed at the same time at the east and in this lay the rest. An act of 1774 placed the land south of the west branch of the Delaware River in Ulster County and so gave German Flats and Canajoharie definite south bounds.

Old England District

The colonial legislature met on April 3, 1775. The final measure receiving approval that day was the creation in Tryon County of Old England District, taken from German Flats. This was destined to be the last act ever to take effect in New York under British rule. The Colonial Assembly never met again. Sixteen days later, April 19, 1775, came the battles of Lexington and Concord. In May a Provincial Congress took over the functions of government for the revolutionaries. In the first state constitution, promulgated in 1777, April 19, 1775, was pronounced the date after which the acts of the English King and his representatives became void.

The boundaries of Old England District began at the head waters of Otsego Lake, ran westward along the north line of the Otsego Patent, continued to the Unadilla so as to include the Edmeston Patents, south along the river to its mouth and one mile farther, then northeast and north along the line of the Wallace Patent to the Susquehanna, north on that river and Otsego Lake to the place of beginning. At the time a part of present Otsego County was left in German Flats.

Soon after the Revolution was won more changes were made. Governor Tryon had led hostile forces against the patriots' towns and homes. It was intolerable that his name should continue to designate a New York County. In 1784, Tryon County was more acceptably renamed Montgomery in honor of a lamented American general who had fallen at Quebec in 1777. Now the local population began greatly to increase. In 1787 the Township of Harpersfield was formed with its southern boundary on the west branch of the Delaware and its northern on the Charlotte and Susquehanna Rivers, thus reducing Canajoharie and Old England Districts. In 1788, the legislature redefined the subdivisions and established several new ones, but now the term "towns" was adopted. As obnoxious a reminder as Tryon, Old England District became Otsego Town. Its area was also enlarged by taking from German Flats more land to the north to about the present county boundary.

Otsego County

Otsego County was erected February 16, 1791. In its first form it was much larger than it is now, including a very large part of Delaware and almost the western half of Schoharie. There were three towns, Otsego and Harpersfield, as already described, and Cherry Valley, newly taken from Canajoharie. The next year another one was authorized, Dorlach, this being taken from Cherry Valley. Dorlach became part of Schoharie when that county was erected in 1795 and renamed Sharon, but the Sharon of that day included Seward and much more of Schoharie County. Similarly the original Town of Harpersfield was divided by the formation of Franklin in 1792 and Kortwright in 1793. In 1797 these three last named towns became parts of new Delaware County. A considerable slice north of the Charlotte River was taken away in 1816 to help form Davenport, Delaware County, another in 1817 as part of new Winfield, Herkimer County, but in 1822 Otsego received back some of the Wallace Patent south of the Susquehanna, thus restoring part of the southern boundary of Old England.

The proceedings here recounted have given Otsego County its extent and outline. Within there have also been alterations, the

latest in 1854. Original Otsego Town has been carved into sixteen, the remainder of original Cherry Valley into eight, resulting in the 24 towns now existing. As a final look at what has been, a spectator at a meeting of the Otsego Board of Supervisors in 1794 would have seen nine members of that body. Only five of these would have been residents within the present limits of the county and each of these would have been representing an area much larger than does any such officer today.

OTSEGO'S EARLY POPULATION

THE first white settlement in present Otsego County was at Cherry Valley in 1740. It continued as the only one, and a small one at that, for a quarter-century. Thereafter in colonial times came two periods of expansion. The result of the Seven Years' War, ending in 1763, brought release from French aggressions and families moved west to the line of Otsego Lake and the Susquehanna River. The King's Proclamation Line of that date was adjusted to the satisfaction of the Iroquois in 1768 and another wave of settlers flowed on to the Unadilla. These pre-Revolutionary pioneers were of various stocks, including a few Palatine Germans from the Mohawk Valley, a greater number of Dutch from the same source, many Scotch, Irish and Scotch-Irish (Ulstermen), some of whom had stopped for a time at more eastern locations, an occasional Jerseyite, lured here by speculators from the Philadelphia area who had secured land grants in Otsego. Toward the western border were considerable numbers of recently arrived native Englishmen. In marked contrast to later periods, very few were New Englanders.

What the population may have been at the outbreak of hostilities with the mother country is difficult to determine. It was close to 300 at Cherry Valley. The names of about 60 families then residing outside that settlement have been found. Others are alluded to, but with insufficient identification. Certainly 900 persons then living within the limits of the county is not an excessive estimate. When the Revolution began, each man had to make the hard choice where to cast his lot. Naturally they divided, but with by far the greater proportion on the patriots' side. The result was civil war with the homesteads as the battle ground. The loyalists were ousted. Some of them actively joined the British and became informants, spies and warriors against their old neighbors. Some declared their neutrality and had to walk a circumspect path. Before the fighting ceased all the settlements had been destroyed and all the residents, who had not been massacred or taken up arms, had fled. The population fell to zero.

With the ensuing peace, the former residents returned, but not alone. Hordes of New Englanders followed and soon became the

predominant element. A few came also from Pennsylvania and New Jersey, but many of these had a New England ancestry. More Palatines and Dutch arrived (Van is a frequently encountered surname prefix now). European immigration to America had ceased with the war years, did not resume until much later. The numbers belonged to the Yankees. Their distinctive character and customs became stamped on the county, where they remain today, together with thousands of their descendants.

In the 1780's the "Otsego Country" was the Far West and an eagerly sought goal. The great land patents, most of whose acres had stood as idle land since their acquisition fifteen, twenty or more years before, were now cut into farm-sized lots and soon rented or sold. Again, it is not possible to state precisely the population at the first Federal census in 1790. The county was erected the next year and until then the eastern third lay in the large town of Canajoharie, which then extended to the Mohawk Valley. A fairly reliable estimate can be made from the known population of the other two-thirds and the exact figures from later censuses. The rate of increase thus determined can be projected backward with the following result:

Population of Otsego County

1790	—	2,420, est.*
1800		21,636
1810		38,802
1820		44,856
1830		51,372

Here is shown an astounding rate of increase, but this was to be duplicated in many localities as the Western movement rolled on. Otsego was the first New York County to experience it, also the first to feel the effects of its resistless onward flow. The 1830 total was Otsego's high point. The figure then has been sometimes approximated, but never quite equalled. The reasons are many and clear, but the one pertinent to this article is that Americans have always been on the

* Tables in the published state census reports for 1855 and 1865 give 1,702 as the population of Otsego in 1790. There was then no such county, but this was the correct figure then for Otsego Town. The 1875 report makes no such statement.

move. In the nothern United States until 1790 they were dammed up at the Line of Property along which lies Otsego's western boundary and the region became actually overpopulated for an agricultural area. With that obstacle removed, local families joined in the general western hegira. As Otsego men moved out, their places were often taken by more New Englanders, but the outflow exceeded the intake. As it was reported in 1789 that multitudes were flocking to Cooperstown at the rate of thirty a day, so one may read that in the spring of 1857, 300 local persons were going west, many to Victoria, Illinois. Such cycles were repeated again and again in the century following the Revolution.

GEORGE CROGHAN AND OTSEGO COUNTY

COLONEL GEORGE CROGHAN (pronounced Crawn) was an Irish Episcopalian who came to Pennsylvania in 1741, engaging successfully in the Indian trade in the western part of that state and along the Ohio River until that business was disrupted by French disturbances. After 1754, his activities were mostly those of a military officer, an official Indian agent and a promoter of westward expansion. He is of interest to Otsego because for a brief period he owned more of its acres than any other person ever did, not forgetting the George Clarkes or William Cooper, and because of the wide attention he directed to the area.

In his way with the Indians, Croghan much resembled his friend Sir William Johnson of New York State, in that he treated them fairly himself, defended them from unfair practices on the part of other whites, learned their tongues, mingled in their social life and took an Indian wife. In 1756, he became chief deputy to Johnson, Sole Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the colonies north of Virginia from 1755 to 1774. Croghan's special field was the region with which he was already familiar, but he was often on duty among the New York Iroquois and the Otsego country became known and attractive to him. For his valuable services in the French and Indian War, he was among the officers named to receive a bounty gift from the King's own New York lands and one of four slated for 10,000 acres. He felt entitled to twice that amount. He knew of an 18,000 acre Otsego tract, applied for it and, after some haggling, received it. He called this Belvedere Township. It lies mostly in the present Town of Roseboom.

For himself and friends he further negotiated four Indian deeds, a necessary preliminary to a patent. The lands concerned are in the western and southern parts of Otsego County and aggregated 350,000 acres. All this was granted in the years 1769 and 1770 under seven royal instruments as the Upton, Morris, Otego, Butler, McKee, Skinner and Otsego Patents. In the two first mentioned Croghan had no financial interest, but he had included the lands desired by Clotworthy Upton and Staats Long Morris in his dealings with the

Indians for the Butler parcel. Both were men of prestige and Croghan was glad to accommodate them. He conveyed his rights under the Indian deed to the large Otego tract to Sir William Franklin, son of Benjamin and colonial governor of New Jersey. The patent was obtained for several persons interested in Croghan's doings, Franklin retaining an interest. Among them were William Trent, Croghan's brother-in-law and partner, Samuel and Thomas Wharton, Quaker Philadelphia merchants, Richard Smith and Richard Wells, members of the Burlington Company, a group of Burlington, New Jersey Quaker capitalists. This was mainly an adjustment of accounts. Franklin was one of those who furnished money for Croghan's enterprises and obtained much on his own credit from the Burlington Company.

The 227,000 acres which comprised the other four patents all came to Croghan. John Butler was a neighbor and intimate of Johnson and a brother officer of Croghan's in the French War. Alexander McKee was his right hand man while in the Indian trade and his successor as Deputy Superintendent. Stephen Skinner was Treasurer of the Province of New Jersey, serving under Franklin. All these were obliging their friend. Croghan applied for the 100,000 acre Otsego Patent in his own name. With Belvedere and with the more than ample highway allowances, Croghan's Otsego possessions now exceeded a quarter million acres.

At one time he hoped to make his permanent home at the foot of Otsego Lake. He was there in the fall of 1768, during much of the next year and well into 1770, making extensive plans for the settlement of the whole region. His son-in-law, Augustine Prevost, came on to occupy 6,061 acres at the tip of the Otsego Patent. The young Joseph Brant, protegee of Johnson, later the husband of Croghan's half-breed Mohawk daughter and the celebrated Iroquois chieftain, was there as guide. Financial embarrassments shortly forced Croghan to part with most of his Otsego properties and to abandon the settlement there. These had been but a fraction of his whole vision of the important part he could play in the rapid extension of the American frontier even to the Mississippi. An example was the proposed fourteenth colony of Vandalia, to be located where West Virginia is now, but larger. Croghan, Trent, Johnson, Benjamin and William Franklin, Charles, Joseph, Samuel and Thomas Wharton were among the

men who applied jointly for 2,400,000 acres in Vandalia. The prospects appeared bright for several years but vanished with Virginian opposition and the ensuing Revolution. With such outcomes, Croghan's land empire collapsed. He had pyramided his speculations, encumbering each new acquisition to secure another, borrowing at high interest and for short terms. He continued vainly to attempt to recoup his fortune along the same line but died a poor man in 1782, one of very many who opened American frontiers with no lasting profit to themselves.

A report on the disposal of Croghan's Otsego lands would be too long to be given here, but some evidence of his impact on the region will be presented. Readers will note that many persons heretofore or hereafter mentioned were from the Philadelphia area. Croghan was the first of these to recognize the local opportunity and his pioneering brought the rest. His own attempted settlement was the first within the lands where he had extinguished the Indian title, but others were made forthwith. Among them were ones by John Tunnicliff in "The Twelve Thousand" (a part of the Otsego Patent), by the Garretts and other Englishmen down the Butternuts Creek, by Richard Smith and his followers at Laurens in the Otsego Patent. (Richard R. Smith, son of Richard, was the first sheriff of Otsego County.)

In atlases will be found the name "Graftsburgh" applied to lands on the Unadilla. It should be "Gratzborough," a tract of 9,050 acres deeded to Bernard Gratz, Croghan's steadfast friend and an executor, for services rendered when Croghan was in utmost need of funds. It was familiarly known as the "Jew's Patent." Hillington is a name still current in Morris. It derives from Henry Hill, a member of the Burlington Company, who received 18,000 acres in the Butler Patent in partial satisfaction of a Croghan debt. There are two Wharton Creeks in Otsego, one flowing into the Unadilla, the other a tributary of the Otego Creek. The first is named for Joseph Wharton, another Croghan creditor, who accepted 15,000 acres there, the second perpetuates in the Otego Patent the name of Samuel Wharton. Burlington as the name of an Otsego Town now needs no explanation, neither does the existence of Quaker churches in the southern and western parts of the county, as in Burlington, Laurens, Milford, Morris and New Lisbon a century or more ago.

In that part of Delaware County which was once in Otsego, are the towns of Franklin and Meredith. They are named for Sir William Franklin and Reese Meredith, merchant of Philadelphia, to whom with three Whartons and others, was patented the "township" of Franklin. Augustine Prevost and his relatives came to have an interest in the McKee Patent. He was related to Aaron Burr, who thus became an attorney for the Croghan Estate, to visit the region often and to enter a ward at Hartwick Seminary. The instances cited all stem directly from Croghan's activities in Otsego. There are many more, and perhaps most important is the fact that William Cooper made his first independent assay in land development on the very spot where George Croghan had made the same kind of effort fifteen years earlier, but with a far different result. In proper keeping, Cooper was born near Philadelphia, was of a Quaker family and came to Otsego from Burlington, New Jersey.

Readers who wish to learn more about this interesting man are referred to Albert T. Volwiler's *George Croghan and the Westward Movement* and a new book scheduled to appear in May of this year, Nicholas B. Wainwright's *George Croghan, Wilderness Diplomat*.

WILLIAM COOPER, COLONIZER

THE place which William Cooper holds in the history of Otsego County stems directly from the remarkable success of his large land operations. A brief outline of his policies and the nature, extent and locations of these undertakings will be attempted here.

Cooper was not a landlord in the sense that were the George Clarkes, of Hyde Bay, or Goldsbrow Banyar, of Albany, both of whom owned much land here and elsewhere but always leased it, thus retaining a hold on the title. Neither was Cooper a land speculator of the type of Robert Morris or Alexander Macomb who acquired vast New York holdings, looking for quick profits but with no thought of the men who would actually till the ground. Cooper was a colonizer. Wild lands were a challenge—almost an affront—to him. He was eager to see them immediately cut into farms, sold and occupied as such, with all the adjuncts of civilization soon replacing a recent wilderness. Accordingly he always so proceeded.

When he opened land sales here in the spring of 1786 his policies were already firmly developed and he had the assurance of one well versed in that risky business. However we have his own word that in Otsego was his first such venture on his own account. He was born near Philadelphia and had kept a store at Burlington, N. J. At both places lived wealthy men who had interests in New York and Pennsylvania undeveloped lands. Cooper knew many of them well and had their confidence. There is evidence that he had served in some capacity in their enterprises. His experience in this field had certainly been brief but for it he had a unique aptitude and he had learned quickly and well.

He always preferred to distribute land by deed in fee simple and would accept small down payments to attain this end, but money at the time was everywhere scarce and the prospective settlers were mainly poor. Cooper willingly altered his policy to fit the realities and often sold on land contracts. When "articles of agreement" were first contrived is uncertain but Cooper early used them in ways of his own. Under his method no down payment was exacted. A price was placed upon a property and the annual legal interest upon that sum was

charged as rent. At first these agreements ran for a specified number of years. If the tenant could make an adequate down payment at the conclusion of the term, he could have a deed at the original valuation. Later Cooper substituted "perpetual" leases, whereby on any anniversary date of the contract, be it soon or late, the same privilege of purchase could be exercised. The rent could be paid in cash or in produce—wheat, corn, beef or pork. These terms were advantageous to moneyless settlers as neither rent or sale price advanced while contract conditions were met. Many continued to rent for years and, as the contracts were transferable, some Cooper farms in Otsego were finally sold long after his death at the low prices of pioneer days. (Cooper specifically bequeathed over 13,000 acres of leased county land and some was left in the estate.)

Early purchasers were encouraged to take up more land than they immediately needed. This made for fewer transactions and rapid distribution. It also resulted in lesser proprietors who could later sell off two or three farms at a profit. To these who took at least 250 acres in his first tract and paid off their mortgages in the stipulated ten years, he promised a free lot at Cooperstown. (They could look forward to a pleasant retirement.) All this stabilized the settlement. Cooper was long sighted.

His original purchase (with Andrew Craig) is given as 40,000 acres. His subsequent acquisitions in the county brought the total to more than 75,000 acres. There was no actual "Cooper's Patent." He was on the ground too late for that, although any large tract such as his was often called a patent.

His ownership elsewhere had been much greater. His will, made in 1808, states that his lands lay in Otsego, Tioga, Broome, Onondaga, Cayuga, Oneida and Herkimer Counties. As most of these counties were later subdivided, Oswego, Cortland, Tompkins and Hamilton can be added. He had already closed out former holdings in St. Lawrence and Franklin Counties. He owned land even in Virginia. He had at some time possessed New York lands outside Otsego aggregating far in excess of 100,000 acres.

Illustrative of his activities is the group of thirty-three local families he led to St. Lawrence County in 1803 to found the present Town of DeKalb. Originally it was named Williamstown for him. The

party included a few of his most successful settlers here who became the leaders there. Cooper's Falls exists there as Cooperstown does here.

Marked success with his own lands soon brought Cooper further business as land agent for non-resident owners. He accepted these commissions for plots however small or large and about wherever situated. He had such clients in Philadelphia, New Jersey, New York City, Albany, even in London and Paris. An item in 1789 was 52,000 acres in Delaware, Chenango and Broome Counties for Richard Morris, of Philadelphia. The next year he quickly sold 25,000 acres in northern Pennsylvania for eight Philadelphia men, one of whom was Benjamin Rush, famed physician. When Charles J. Evans, of New York City, then sought his services for the sale of more than 50,000 acres in Delaware County, Cooper replied, ". . . I did not think of taking any more under my care yet awhile having just got through with three hundred thousand acres," but he entertained the proposition.

William Cooper must be regarded as the ablest and most successful colonizer during New York State's pioneer era. There is no reason to question his own statement as made in 1807, "I have already settled more acres than any man in America. There are forty thousand souls now holding, directly or indirectly, under me."

DOCUMENT—JACOB MORRIS

(Original owned by Mr. John C. Pearson, of Cleveland, and here printed with his permission.)

WE THE subscribed inhabitants of the Butternuts in the district of old england and County of Montgomery Beg leave to represent to the Honorable—the Council of appointment that we experience much inconvenience for the want of a justice of the peace among us and therefore pray that you will be pleased to appoint Mr. Jacob Morris to that office he being a fit person in the opinion of the people to fill that commission

23rd feby 1788

L. DeVillers
John Tunnicliff
John Johnson
Robert Garret
Joseph Tunnicliff
John Russel
Andre Renouard
Nathaniel Storrs
Robert Edmeston

Notes by Roy L. Butterfield, County Historian

The first New York State constitution, adopted in 1777, provided for a Council of Appointment. This body was composed of the governor, and four state senators, each representing a different section of the state. It appointed many state officers, all militia and county officers and the justices of all courts whatever. Its political complexion often changed and its appointees with it. The Council was abolished under the constitution of 1821, but justices of the peace were not elected by the people until 1826. Previously this office had much wider jurisdiction than it has at present.

Jacob Morris, an officer in the Revolution, came in 1787 to what is now the Town of Morris as agent for the land patent which had been in his family since 1769. The petition here made was acted upon favorably. He was also the first Otsego County Clerk, serving ten years.

During most of this time he was in the state assembly or senate. Appointed a brigadier-general of militia in 1797, he was promoted to major-general in 1810 but was superseded the next year, his party, (Federalist) having lost control of the Council.

"*Old England District*" comprised all present Otsego County west and north of Otsego Lake and the Susquehanna River with the exception of the present towns of Richfield, Exeter and Plainfield. In March 1788 the name was changed to Otsego Town with the territory of the three other towns just named added.

All the petitioners lived on or near the "Old Butternuts Road" which ran down the east side of Canadarago Lake following present county and state routes to and down the Butternuts Creek. It existed before the Revolution. *Louis deVillers* was from France. He kept an early tavern at Elm Grove, a short way north of Morris Village. *Andre Renouard* was also French. He kept a store in Chaumont Valley, now the western part of New Lisbon. *John Tunnicliff*, an Englishman, who had had previous residences elsewhere in America, lead a considerable party of his countrymen to this area about 1772. Among them were his son *Joseph Tunnicliff*, *John Johnson*, *John Russel* and several of the *Garrett* family, who gave the name to Garrettsville. *Nathaniel Storrs* was Morris's next door neighbor. *Robert Edmeston* was a British army officer who was rewarded for his services in the French and Indian War with a gift from the king of 5,000 acres of unappropriated New York land. He located this on the Unadilla River. His brother, William, had a like amount adjoining, hence today's Edmeston.

DR. NATHANIEL GOTT

WHEN Otsego County was young few of its physicians had attended a medical school. These were then rare in America, the earliest being established at Philadelphia in 1765. The first in this state was at New York City in 1808, the next at Fairfield, Herkimer County, in 1812. No other existed in the state for more than twenty years. Some medical men, well trained in their native lands, were among the European immigrants. A few Americans went abroad for this instruction. For the most part candidates underwent a medical apprenticeship with a qualified practitioner, observing and assisting him, compounding his medicines, reading in his library and at the successful end of such service receiving a certificate to assure future patients of the fledgling's proficiency. This procedure was common far into the 19th century, but increasingly supplemented by laboratory work and attendance upon lectures as medical knowledge enlarged. By the time this county was created new or incoming practitioners were also required to obtain a license from the presiding county judge, who could call to his assistance others to test their fitness if he thought best. Legislation in 1806 provided for medical societies in the state and in the several counties with admission to practice then placed in the hands of the latter. Much of all this is illustrated in the following individual case.

Dr. Nathaniel Gott, one of Otsego County's earliest physicians, was a colorful, perhaps eccentric, character. He was convivial of habit, fiery in temperament and somewhat of a rhymster. He retained the colonial costume of knee breeches, buckled shoes and three-cornered hat to the end of his life and ate his meals from a wooden trencher on the ground that so he did not dull his knife. For such reasons much lore has gathered about his name and in this field lies practically all that has been locally told about Doctor Gott. There is much more to be told, which is the reason for the choice here made. His frequent use of Latin phrases betokens a classical education, in medical preparation he at least equalled—and probably excelled—the majority of contemporary practitioners, he had an exciting part in the Revolution, he furnished local leadership to his profession. Further, his mental

attributes—or his wife's—must have been superior, as among his descendants in every succeeding generation have been persons of far more than average attainments, including educators, lawyers and very many physicians. It is fitting that he be now placed in fuller perspective in the community which he served for more than thirty years.

Nathaniel Gott (1755-1828) was born in the Town of Wenham, Mass., a descendent of one of that first Puritan band which landed at Salem in 1628. In 1771, he began the study of medicine. During the year 1775 he served briefly in his home town militia, including an answer to the Lexington alarm. The following year he began a series of cruises as ship surgeon on American privateers. Between these he continued study with Dr. Amos Putnam, of neighboring Danvers, who had been an army surgeon in the French and Indian War. It was probably on the third of these voyages that his vessel was captured or destroyed in the Bay of Biscay. In some way he gained the European shore, was licensed by the Amsterdam College of Surgeons and was employed at St. Lewis Hospital, Lisbon, Portugal. Later, at the order of John Jay, then Minister from the Continental Congress, he was transferred to St. James Hospital, Cadiz, Spain, to care for sick and wounded American prisoners. He returned home early in 1778. In the Massachusetts Revolutionary Archives is a manuscript affidavit made by Doctor Gott on July 14th, 1779 on his return from yet another cruise. In this he charges the ship master with inhuman treatment of a marine who was flogged while very ill and then refused food or medical care. The doctor avers that he disregarded the order, but that the marine died.

His service over, he practiced a while in his home town, then joined the general New England movement to newer territories, locating at Guildhall, Vermont, in 1782, at Cheshire, Mass., in 1785 and came to Cooperstown in 1792. His final removal was to Hartwick in 1797 or 1798. He was still there in 1826 and perhaps a little longer. He was a charter member of the Otsego County Medical Society. Eleven years earlier, he had called together the practitioners of the area to consider their mutual problems and acted as chairman at the resultant meeting. These conferences continued at intervals pending the more formal organization.

Like many of his profession in those times, he had often to pre-

pare his own remedies. In this he was especially skilled. Although constantly attending his patients, while at Cooperstown he was in a drug store partnership with Dr. John Russell, thereafter, at Hartwick successively with Dr. David E. Hatch and Charles Fraser. However, in business he had small success.

He was married twice, first to Sarah Brigham, also of a notable Wenham family. She died at Cooperstown in 1797, leaving two sons both born in New England. John was a prominent business man of Albany, receiving long and warm obituaries in the newspapers of that city at his death in 1858. Nathaniel, Jr., removed to Clarence, Erie County in 1808 and to Ann Arbor, Michigan about 1828. In the alumni directory of the University of Michigan are the names of many of this family. The second wife was Hannah Bradford, descended from the noted William Bradford who for thirty years in the interval 1621-1657 was governor of the Pilgrim Plymouth Colony.

Doctor Gott died at the home of his son in Clarence. Still in possession of the family are the license from the Amsterdam College of Surgeons, the certificate of hospital service at Cadiz, Doctor Putnam's certificate of proficiency, the recipe book of medicines and the "shingle" which hung before his door. Much of his library has been presented to the University of Michigan.

A TRANSPORTATION STORY

OVER the ages men have used many means to move their persons and their belongings from place to place. Human legs were once used much more than now, and quite effectively, but other aids were adopted as circumstances permitted; the saddled horse, wheeled vehicles propelled by animal, steam, electric or gasoline power, transit by air. Some of these have been confined to rails, others are more free. Perhaps the bicycle should be mentioned. All these are involved in Otsego's history. In a new unsettled region, resort was first had to water wherever possible. New York State is unusually fortunate in this facility.

The principal branch of the Susquehanna River has its rise in Otsego Lake. With its tributaries, their extensions and relatively short land carries, the "long, crooked river" was a great early waterway through which much of present New York State could be reached; the Mohawk-Hudson Valley and so Oswego River and Lake Ontario, the Finger Lakes, the Delaware, the Genesee, the Alleghany. All this was well known to the aborigines. White men first found the beginning of this system in 1614, when two Dutch traders came over the ancient Indian trail from Canajoharie to Otsego Lake. Thereafter explorers, traders, missionaries, surveyors, armed forces and pioneers followed the same path until the days of toll roads, canals and railroads. In the early post-Revolutionary period, rafts of lumber were steered down the 450-mile length of the Susquehanna to Pennsylvania cities and to Baltimore, later "arks" carried country produce to the same markets. Sales completed, the crews walked back! Astonishing as such foot journeys by ordinary folk now seem, they were by no means exceptional. Many a young Connecticut man used the same natural equipment to select personally his Otsego home to be. Others are known to have gone on like errands on foot as far as Ohio.

Some examples of the use of water courses may be given, both for reaching and leaving this county. In 1769 Richard Smith, of Burlington, N. J., came here with a party to survey his Otsego possessions. The careful diary he kept shows that he took a sloop from New York City to Albany, a wagon along the Mohawk to Canajoharie, to Cherry

Valley and to Springfield, a bateau on Otsego Lake, a canoe down the Susquehanna to Oquaga, this interrupted by the business Smith came upon. Thence the party used the Indians' pack horses and their own feet to the Delaware River at Deposit and again a canoe to reach home. On a trip of over 600 miles described, about 475 were by water. In 1787 Jacob Morris used the same route as far as Unadilla, then up the river of that name and the Butternuts Creek to the home site he had just selected. On this occasion the Mohawk was traversed by bateau. (His experiences are most interestingly recited in a contemporary letter, reprinted in Hurd's Otsego County History, page 204.) In 1805 William Hodge, three years married and aged 24, left Exeter by wagon for Utica. His objective was Buffalo and the rest of the journey was almost entirely by water, using the Lake Ontario route already mentioned. He became a well-known man at his promising new location. Of interest is the fact that his son Philander returned to Hartwick Seminary for his education. A young Hartwick man named Holbrook sized up Ohio opportunities in 1818. He sent back a letter describing his journey from Olean on the Alleghany, Ohio and Scioto Rivers to Worthington, Ohio. He likely first used the Susquehanna and the Chemung, as he says his whole travel was 1030 miles. He found out later that the distance by land was 700 miles, but he probably had chosen the better mode for a man traveling light.

Water courses served very well for exploratory trips, also for freight if continuous to a destination, but household goods and merchandise had also to be sent far inland. Land proprietors cut rough roads to their tracts to assist settlers, but federal authorities required better ones before approving postal service. For many years the interior regions were not sufficiently developed to build proper roads by local labor or through property taxation, so "great state roads" were constructed with funds raised by lotteries approved by the legislature. One of these extended from Catskill far to the west of the state, touching Unadilla. Other stage mail routes, connecting important points, were laid out by the county highway commissioners. These also came to be called "great roads" and there were several in this county. Soon toll turnpikes, built by incorporated stock companies, provided a better way. Two of the most important of these served the county. Both were in operation soon after 1800. The Catskill and Susquehanna Turn-

pike linked the Hudson with Wattles' Ferry at Unadilla. (At first this followed the Ouleout Creek in Delaware County, so only its western terminus touched Otsego. About 1844 its route was changed from West Harpersfield, coming into Oneonta, but by this time many turnpike companies had ceased operations and maintenance of their rights of way returned to the public.) The Great Western Turnpike was built piecemeal in many sections, parts of three were in this county. The first ran from Albany to Cherry Valley, the second thence through Cooperstown and on West by present Route 80 to Sherburne, the third took the more direct way from Cherry Valley to Cazenovia (now familiar Route 20), with a branch to join the Great Seneca Road at Manlius, the third, fourth and fifth extended these on to such points as Skaneateles and Ithaca, there meeting other systems. Private capital was also needed to construct bridges over the larger rivers and additional toll was there exacted. An example was the Colliersville bridge (present Route 7, a turnpike as early as 1812). A recent development in transportation is a return to the toll principle, whereby the traffic pays the cost. Throughout the first half of the past century stage lines were the chief agents in carrying passengers, mail and express in this locality.

When the ambitious projects for the state's extensive canal system were under consideration, Otsego made strong bid for the use of the Mohawk-Otsego Lake-Susquehanna route as part, but was finally by-passed and all the former main objectives (Oswego, Binghamton, the Finger Lakes, Olean, etc.) were reached by several extensions of the Erie itself and by a canal from Kingston to the Delaware at Port Jervis. The Erie Canal was of tremendous importance to New York's commerce and to farmers near its route, but long brought ruinous competition from the western states to such more remote regions as Otsego County.

Steam engines could go on rails where canal boats could not. They could also operate throughout the year, a privilege denied to canals. Railroad construction began in the 1830's and at just about the Civil War period reached this county. Local steam roads were built and operated at first by comparatively small companies which later consolidated with major organizations. The only main line with any considerable trackage in the county is the Delaware & Hudson which

closely parallels the southern boundary. The Ontario & Western and the Unadilla Valley ran close to the western boundary, but in Chenango County and are now defunct. Spurs from these two and the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western do—or have—ended at Cooperstown, Cherry Valley, Edmeston and Richfield Springs. With the advent of steam railroads, what little was left of river traffic promptly disappeared.

The production of electric current on a large scale brought another change. Successful operation of trolley cars in cities led to interurban lines. Otsego's part in this development was a company which existed under a succession of names, ending as the Southern New York Power & Railway Company. Its right of way was from Oneonta up Otego Creek to Hartwick and east to Index, where there was a "Y," with the one prong extending to Cooperstown and the other to Richfield Springs, later to Herkimer. Operation began in 1901 and the service was of great benefit during the brief succeeding years of the heyday of interurban trolleys, but the carrying of passengers ceased in 1931 and the tracks were converted to steel needs with the coming of World War II.

During the present century we have been living in the gasoline and rubber era. Its vehicles, like the automobile, the bus, the moving van and the airplane, are too familiar to need mention, but additions to this story can be foreseen as the atomic age matures.

IMPROVING THE MIND

Otsego pioneers kept intellectually alive from the very first despite the hardships and severe physical labor they constantly faced. Two excellent illustrations are found in the establishment of common schools for the young before there was any official requirement to that effect and in the founding of subscription libraries for the use of all ages almost before the families were decently housed. These ends were both accomplished through the voluntary cooperation of the residents and through their own efforts alone.

In order to present clearly the early status of schools, some background should be given. The first state constitution, adopted during the Revolution, made no reference to education. The Board of Regents, established in 1784, had control only of academies and colleges and so began at the top—or wrong end—of the educational ladder. Elementary education was left, as it long had been in New York, to the parents and the churches. In 1795, for the first time, public appropriations were made for common schools, but that law was in effect for five years only and whether or not a community maintained a school was entirely a local option. The state did begin to invest sums to produce eventually a school fund but not until 1812 were district schools obligatory. Jedediah Peck, of Burlington, who as a legislator had valiantly sought this goal a decade or more earlier, was chairman of the commission which then framed the measure.

Yankee Otsego parents did not wait for the compulsion of law. As soon as a half-dozen families were settled within reasonable distances a school on the New England pattern sprang up. Naturally such schools reported to no one, but many references to them are made in old letters, diaries, recollections written later by persons who attended them, to religious meetings held in existing school buildings and the like. How many of these community schools may have been maintained in the county cannot be told but enough are known to testify eloquently to Otsego citizens' respect for education. Levi Beardsley, born 1785, mentions in his Reminiscences the one of his boyhood at Richfield (Monticello) and a library there as well. Some of the first required school meetings in 1813 were held in school houses

already standing. At one of these, previous non-members were offered a share in the school property upon payment of the proportional cost.

The buildings then were indeed crude and the furnishings uncomfortable but these schools did accomplish their purpose and the first generation of children reared in Otsego County were a literate group.

It may be appropriate to add that Cherry Valley had an academy as early as 1795. When it was chartered by the Regents the next year Eliphalet Nott became its principal. This is the man who in 1804 began a 62-year term as President of Union College, a record unprecedented in the annals of American education.

* * * * *

In 1796 the legislature noted that "a disposition for improvement in useful knowledge has manifested itself in various parts of this state by associating for . . . social and public libraries and whereas it is of the utmost importance to the public that . . . institutions for that purpose be encouraged and promoted," it forthwith provided for the incorporation of such societies, going into full detail. At least 20 persons, contributing a total of \$100 or more, would constitute the original membership, in reality a stock company. Shares were property and transferable. Two-thirds of the members responding to a call for a meeting could there elect a chairman, a treasurer, a librarian, five to twelve trustees and adopt a name. The chairman then returned an affidavit to the county clerk that the conditions of law had been met and received a certificate of incorporation. Trustees met quarterly and by-laws covered admission of later members, assessments, loans, fines and use by non-members.

Otsego had been one of those places where a disposition for improvement had earlier manifested itself but the first corporation of the kind on the county records is the Otsego Library in 1804. Its membership was from the Fly Creek-Toddsville-Christian Hill area. Following in order came these others, with titles differing from their communities given in parentheses: Unadilla, 1805; Exeter (Friendship), Cherry Valley, 1806; Worcester, Richfield (Columbian), Burlington (Alexandrian), 1807; New Lisbon (Harmony), Burlington (Farmers'), 1808; Middlefield, Laurens, Otsego (Washington), 1810; Hartwick, Westford, 1812; Maryland, 1813; Milford, 1814; Hartwick Seminary (Addison), 1817; Louisville, now Morris (Butternuts),

Springfield, 1826; Middlefield Center, Cooperstown (Franklin), 1827; Burlington (Franklin), 1828; Middlefield and Westford combined (Waterville), 1831.

The most prominent professional, political, civic and business figures of the county were among the strong supporters of these enterprises and served as trustees. Their calibre may be judged from a few familiar names: William G. Angel, William Baker, William Campbell, Silas Crippen, Stukely Ellsworth, Sumner Ely, Ernest L. Hazelius, Gurdon Huntington, Solomon Martin, Elijah H. Metcalf, Timothy Morse, Sherman Page, Robert Roseboom, John Russell, Amos Spencer and Rufus Steere.

Beginning in 1838 the legislature made an annual appropriation of \$55,000 to provide libraries in every school district. The state offered to match any sum voted by a district up to \$20 a year. Levi Beardsley as a state senator, doubtless recalling how he had benefited from such a facility in his youthful years, was a most active proponent of this measure. Otsego schools promptly embraced this opportunity and soon a library was within easy reach of every family.

OTSEGO IN OHIO

(Acknowledgment is gratefully made to Mr. John C. Pearson, of Cleveland, O., for assistance on this chapter.)

SUCCESS in the Revolution assured the new United States nation sovereignty over the Northwest Territory, an area ultimately carved into five states—Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin. A long story could be written about Otsegoans attracted to each one of these regions, possibly most about Michigan. An Otsego County and an Otsego Lake are at one location in Michigan and a village of Otsego at another. In 1860 more than 190,000 native New Yorkers were living in that state. However, Ohio is the nearest to us, was the first to receive eastern settlers and Otsego influence there may be taken as typical of all the rest. Migration thither was quite continuous from before 1800 until the Civil War and well distributed over the state.

Samuel Wilson was among the first to leave for Ohio, going to Worthington about 1798. A Massachusetts soldier of the Revolution with extensive service in this state and a son-in-law of John Adams, Fly Creek pioneer, Wilson had previously helped keep the first store in the present Town of Hartwick from 1792 to 1797.

Abram Garfield, of Worcester, went to Cuyahoga County in 1820. There James A., the future president, was born ten years later. Almost incredible were the series of tragedies that befell the Garfield men. Solomon, the President's great grandfather, and the Worcester pioneer of 1790, was killed in 1807 by a falling tree. Previously the grandfather, Thomas, had succumbed to small pox at the age of 32. The father, Abram, died of injuries received in fighting an Ohio forest fire in 1833 and the President was assassinated within four months after he had entered the White House.

Dwight Jarvis, of Fly Creek, finished his law studies in 1822, then practiced successively at Athens, Canton and Massillon, O. He was active in civic affairs and rose to the rank of Major-General in the Ohio Militia.

At Canton, his law partner was David A. Starkweather, a one-time Cooperstown resident, who had gone first to Mansfield in 1825. Starkweather was prominent in Ohio politics, serving in both branches

of the state legislature, two terms in Congress, as a Presidential elector and being appointed Minister of Chile in 1854.

Kent Jarvis, a younger brother of Dwight, had engaged in wool carding and dyeing in Otsego and Lewis Counties with indifferent success before deciding to try Michigan in 1844. On the way he stopped to see his Ohio brother and remained there. After a time he went into Massillon real estate with gratifying results, thus beginning a marked career in business, public life and philanthropy. He became a trustee of Kenyon College and the Gambier Theological Seminary, and at the outbreak of the Civil War was made a Brigadier-General.

James F. Clark, of Otsego, reached Cleveland in 1833 at the age of 24. After a few years in the hardware business he became identified with Ohio railroads and was also interested in real estate and banking, acquiring a substantial fortune. At his death in 1884 he was President of the Pennsylvania and Ohio Coal Company. He made a bequest of \$33,333.33 to Hartwick Seminary, by far the largest gift received by the institution up to that time. His wife was a generous donor to women's education at Western Reserve University.

One of Clark's Cleveland partners was Samuel Potter, his old Otsego neighbor on the River Road between Index and Cooperstown. Potter later became a leading citizen of Terre Haute, Indiana.

Elias and Ralph R. Root, who had lived hard by the Clarks and Potters, became wholesale merchants at Cleveland.

Asahel Clark, older brother of James, also went to Cleveland, he in 1835. He did not live the year out, dying suddenly on a stage coach trip at the age of 36. His wife, Sabrina Loomis, was another of the River Road contingent and their daughter Mary was noted for her good works during the Civil War.

George Worthington, of the well known Cooperstown family, founded at Cleveland the firm which bears his name. Associated with him was his cousin James Barnett, of Cherry Valley.

Richard Fry, born in Hartwick, taught school to earn his education as a physician then in 1830 began a half century's practice at Cleveland among many who had been his pupils and patrons here.

A host of other persons from many Otsego towns who found various Ohio locations deserve mention, but space must be saved for a final intriguing item.

The Reverend Solomon Spaulding was preaching at Cherry Valley and teaching at the academy there in 1795. He reappeared at Conneaut, Ohio, in 1809. He was given to writing historical romances and occasionally read excerpts to his relatives and neighbors. When copies of the Book of Mormon first circulated in Ohio the clergyman's earlier listeners saw a connection between it and Spaulding's productions. The notion took root that Prophet Joseph Smith had secured a Spaulding manuscript and used it for his own purpose. This theory has been exploded by modern research, but it was long in contention by the Mormon Church and its opponents. Spaulding died at Pittsburgh in 1816. His widow returned to this county, bringing some of her late husband's effects. Hence the search for evidence was eager and thorough here. This whole story is best told in Fawn M. Brodie's life of Joseph Smith, *No Man Knows My History*.

NOTABLE NATIVE SONS

OTSEGO COUNTY has been the birthplace of many distinguished persons, so many that some choice among them must be made for mention here. The criterion used for fairness in selection is that the subject must have been given a place in the standard *Dictionary of American Biography*. Eighteen men who meet this test are briefly identified below and arranged in order of priority of birth. This much will illustrate to some degree the part Otsego's sons have played in the larger world.

John Wells, (1770-1825), lawyer: prominent Federalist; born Cherry Valley; the only survivor of his immediate family following the massacre there; went to New York City; Princeton 1788; soon had no superior at the New York bar.

George Peck, (1797-1876), Methodist clergyman; born Middlefield, son of Luther Peck, bulwark of early local Methodism; in 1814 removed with his family to Hamilton, Madison County; circuit rider, presiding elder, editor of his denomination's periodicals; prolific writer on religious topics.

William W. Campbell, (1806-1881), jurist, historian, congressman; born Cherry Valley; Union 1827; practiced New York City; Congress 1854-57; then returned to his native village; New York Supreme Court justice 1857-65; best known historical work, *Annals of Tryon County*.

Parley P. Pratt, (1807-1857), early Mormon; born Burlington; in youth lived in Pennsylvania, Ohio and western New York; one of the Mormon "twelve apostles" 1835; missionary to many states and to Canada and England; assassinated in Arkansas by the husband of a convert; revered as a martyr by his church.

William H. Bissell, (1811-1860), soldier, congressman, Illinois governor; born Hartwick; Hartwick Seminary, Jefferson Medical College, Philadelphia 1835; to Illinois 1836; elected to legislature; switched to law; distinguished for heroism Mexican War; Congress 1848-50; governor 1858 until his death.

Jesse T. Peck, (1811-1883), Methodist clergyman; born Middlefield, brother of George Peck above; at 1844 General Conference championed the anti-slavery measure which divided the Methodist Church North and South; president Dickinson College 1848-52; instrumental in establishing Syracuse University; a bishop in 1872 and prominent in church enterprises abroad.

Benjamin F. Angel, (1815-1894), lawyer, diplomat, agriculturalist; born Burlington; family removed during his youth to Livingston County; prominent Democrat; consul at Hawaii 1853; special envoy to China 1855; minister to Norway and Sweden 1857; president State Agricultural Society 1873.

Isaac N. Arnold, (1815-1884), lawyer, congressman, historian; born Hartwick; attended Hartwick Seminary, to Chicago 1836 and long one of the ablest and most successful lawyers there; a founder of the Republican party; Congress 1860-64, introduced the constitutional amendment abolishing slavery; close political friend and biographer of Lincoln..

Renselaer R. Nelson, (1826-1904), lawyer, jurist; born Cooperstown, son of Samuel Nelson, later U. S. Supreme Court justice; Hartwick Seminary, Yale 1846; practiced briefly at Buffalo; to St. Paul 1850; Justice Supreme Court, Minnesota Territory 1857; U. S. District judge 1858-96.

Edward S. Bragg, (1827-1912), lawyer, soldier, diplomat; born Unadilla; Hobart College; removed to Fon du Lac, Wis.; rose to brigadier-general in the Civil War; Consul at Hong Kong; minister to Mexico 1888; replying to a Tammany attack on Grover Cleveland at the National Democratic Convention 1884 he uttered a phrase since often repeated, "We love him for the enemies he has made."

Norman J. Colman, (1827-1911), lawyer, agricultural journalist; born Richfield; removed successively to Louisville, Ky., New Albany, Indiana and St. Louis; there established Colman's *Rural World* 1865; lieutenant-governor 1874; first U. S. Secretary of Agriculture 1889.

Eliphalet W. Bliss, (1836-1903), manufacturer; born Fly Creek; learned machinist trade, special aptitude in sheet metal; to Brooklyn 1866; established E. W. Bliss Company and United States Projectile Company, which have supplied the government with torpedoes, navy shells, etc. ever since.

Lewis E. Waterman, (1837-1901), inventor and manufacturer; born Decatur; removed to Kankakee, Illinois 1853, later to Boston; in 1884 at New York City devised an early practicable fountain pen and headed the very successful company bearing his name which manufactures it.

George M. Sternberg, (1838-1915), physician, bacteriologist, epidemiologist; born Hartwick; Hartwick Seminary, College Physicians and Surgeons, New York City 1860; Civil War surgeon, remained in that service; Surgeon-General U. S. Army 1893-1902; wrote over 150 books, reports and articles.

Andrew S. Draper, (1848-1913), lawyer, educator; born Westford; New York State Superintendent of Public Instruction 1886-92; superintendent Cleveland, Ohio schools 1892-94; president University of Illinois 1894-04; first Commissioner of Education, New York State under unification 1904-13.

Stephen S. Gregory, (1849-1920), lawyer, born Unadilla; family removed Madison, Wisconsin 1858; practiced there and at Chicago after 1874; one of the ablest trial lawyers of his time and retained in many liberal causes, including defense of E. V. Debs in noted Pullman strike of 1893; president American Bar Association, 1911.

Henry E. Huntington, (1850-1927), railway executive, financier; born Oneonta; nephew of Collis P. Huntington, railroad magnate, and inherited most of that vast estate; founded and endowed the famous H. E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, San Marino.

Israel C. Russell, (1852-1906), geologist; born Garrattsville; at age twelve removed with family to Plainfield, N. J.; engaged 1876-91 in government and other geological and geodetic surveys over most of

the United States, including Alaska; authority on North American geography and glaciology.

Readers will note that these Otsego natives quite uniformly spent most of their lives and achieved their fame elsewhere. A similar list could be compiled for persons meeting the same standard but for whom this county has been an adopted home for some part of their careers.

OTSEGO WRITERS

MORE than fifty persons of literary merit and with some county connection can readily be located. Together they have produced a vast amount of material upon a wide range of topics. Men of this stamp—Isaac Arnold, William W. Campbell, George Peck, George M. Sternberg and others—were mentioned in the last chapter. Now some other names and samples of titles will receive attention, not as much as they deserve but hopefully enough to indicate Otsego's prominence in this field. Several well known authors who were here for short periods and the writers of some valuable town and village histories are purposely, but regrettably, omitted.

The first name coming to mind in this respect is Cooper, but that names a dynasty, not an individual. William Cooper started it with his *Guide in the Wilderness*, a most informative book on pioneering in New York. Every generation since has included one or more writers. William's celebrated author-son, James Fenimore Cooper, needs no comment. James' gifted daughter, Susan A., wrote delightfully on country life. Best known is her *Rural Hours*. A younger James Fenimore contributed *Legends and Traditions of a Northern County*. (The county is Otsego.) His sons, Paul and still another James Fenimore, G. Pomeroy Keese, Constance (Pomeroy) Woolson and Clare Benedict complete the roster of the Cooper clan to be listed here with the exception of a sixth generation representative, Henry S. Cooper, already on his way.

Next in family numbers may be the Cookes. Joseph B. Cooke, M. D., of Cooperstown, wrote several volumes on his specialty of obstetrics. His wife, Constance Cottin and three of his children, Ursula, Joseph C. and Charles H., have seen their productions in print. Charles' *The Big Show* was Harper's Find of the Year in 1938 and his *Piano Playing for Pleasure* has been translated into French, German and Japanese.

Jabez D. Hammond, lawyer and public servant of Cherry Valley, wrote the standard *History of Political Parties in the State of New York*. Seventy-five stories of the pious type once sought for Sunday School libraries appeared under the pen name of "Pansy." The au-

thor was Isabel M. Alden whose husband was pastor of the Cooperstown Presbyterian Church 1870-73. William W. Lord, rector of Cooperstown Christ Church 1876-83 was a poet of renown. The excellent short stories written by Shelden Stoddard, of Gilbertsville, for *The Youth's Companion* in the early part of this century amount to a sizable volume. *The Country Kitchen*, by Della T. Lutes of Cooperstown, is a classic of its kind. Willard H. Wright, one-time resident of Oneonta, would probably be more quickly recognized as "S. S. Van Dine," the pseudonym used for his many detective stories. He also wrote more seriously on art and the theatre. The volumes of G. E. Kidder-Smith, of Springfield, have dealt mostly with progress of architecture abroad. Jay P. Kinney, now retired at Hartwick from his former positions with the Federal Departments both of the Interior and of Justice, has published much on Indian land tenure, forestry history and law. *Thunder Hill*, by Elizabeth Nicholds of Fly Creek, is an amusing story of goat raising on a New Lisbon farm. Louis C. Jones, director of the New York State Historical Association, is an authority on American folklore. His *Spooks of The Valley* is a favorite with the young and his very recent *Things That Go Bump in the Night* equally so with older readers. John Durant, of New Lisbon, turns out mostly pictorial histories, with emphasis on sports and entertainment.

Our author's thoughts have often turned to Otsego's place in history. Josiah Priest, born in Unadilla, devoted the two decades before 1845 to writing the kind of pamphlets which were as popular a century ago as paper-backs are today. Many topics were treated and the total copies certainly exceeded 100,000 but originals are rare today and command high prices. Most valuable are stories of the Revolution, which if he had not gathered from the lips of survivors would have been entirely lost to history. Several concern this area, one is the captivity of David Ogden, of Otego. (Josiah's talented son, J. Addison Priest, was the pastor of a Cooperstown Church in 1851 to 1854. He also wrote for publication.) Jeptha R. Simms as a young man was with his family at Plainfield but later was station agent at Fultonville where he assiduously collected historical items largely through interviews with old-timers. These resulted in *The History of Schoharie County* 1845 and *The Trappers of New York* 1850, first editions now being collector's items.

Levi Beardsley, Cherry Valley lawyer, spent his youth in Richfield. His *Reminiscenses* (1852) contains an invaluable record of early conditions here. Henry Clarke Wright, clergyman, was an infant when his family arrived in Hartwick in 1801. In mature years he was effectively connected in Massachusetts and abroad with the many reform movements of his day. *Human Life*, his quaintly termed autobiography, is another splendid account of Otsego pioneer days.

Minor, but of interest, are *The Forest King*, the story of Joseph Mayall, famous Revolutionary scout of Laurens, written by Hervey Keyes of Mt. Vision and two Otsego legends woven into verse by James Pitcher of Hartwick Seminary, *The Hermit of Moss Pond* and the *Mystery of Fairy Spring*.

Francis W. Halsey, a native of Unadilla, has given us *The Old New York Frontier*, the most indispensable work on the early history of this area. The best description of Otsego "in a state of nature" is in the 1769 journal of Richard Smith, edited by Halsey and published as *A Tour of Four Great Rivers*. James A. Frost's *Life on the Upper Susquehanna, 1783-1860* covers much of the same territory and some of the same period as Halsey, but with more attention to economic matters. Willard V. Huntington, also of Oneonta, spent many years in gathering from every available source items pertaining to this county up to 1865 and arranging them in a huge chronology called *Old Time Notes*. Unfortunately this exists only in manuscript form.

No one has yet attempted to assemble our regional history for the period since the Civil War.

GOLD RUSH DAYS

THE California gold discovery in January 1848 resulted in one of the epics of American history. The site was still on Mexican territory at the date but treaty negotiations were already under way and California became United States soil the following March. Naturally the discoverers tried to keep their secret, but the tidings reached New York City in October and excitement was soon extreme throughout the world. Throngs set out for the new El Dorado. It would have been strange if Otsego were not affected. It was—abundantly.

Two local participants prepared from their diaries excellent full accounts long after the event. One, by Dr. Gaius L. Halsey of Unadilla, appeared in the *Unadilla Times* during the spring and summer of 1890 and has been reprinted in Francis W. Halsey's *Pioneers of Unadilla*. The other, by Frederick T. Jarvis of Hartwick, is now at the State Historical Association, Cooperstown, in the files of the *Otsego Republican* from February 17 through May of 1890. Especially interested readers may find in these far more detail than can be given here.

Usually these gold seekers formed companies, pooling their capital and taking along ample provisions and equipment. This often proved too much for transportation facilities and quantities were discarded on the way.

Several possible routes existed, each with its difficulties: the earliest around Cape Horn, a voyage of six or more months duration; overland by animal power, almost equally time consuming; by the Isthmus of Panama, most favored; sometimes by Nicaragua or across Mexico. Otsegoans used them all.

Luck with these ventures varied but much of it was bad. Travel troubles, exorbitant prices and illness caused many to turn back. Those who persevered in their original intention usually found gold, not by the shovelful as advertised, but they had shared in a memorable episode. Most successful were those who abandoned the "diggings," turning to freighting, trading and otherwise catering to the needs of their fellows.

Collis P. Huntington, of Oneonta, was the first of the county's

residents to grasp the opportunity. In business here with his brother Solon, they sent a cargo of merchandise around Cape Horn in the fall of 1848. Following in the winter by Panama, Collis was held up there three months for lack of further transportation. He improved the period by shuttling over the isthmus in trade, considerably to his advantage. Coming to his goal at last, he continued profitably in business. He spent one day at the mines, doubtless as an onlooker. He declined an early request from 25 to 30 Oneontans that he lead them to the gold fields. Of his later career in railroading, there is no need to speak. He was an Otsego forty-niner who made a colossal fortune, but not by panning gold in the sluices.

Doctor Halsey went with a company recruited in Connecticut, his wife's native state. This left New York on February 23, 1849. Immediate connections had been booked from Panama on by steamboat. It wasn't there, the crew having deserted for the mines on the previous voyage. All were detained until another ship they had seen in New York came around the Horn and picked them up. Three thousand other United States citizens were in like plight. At Sacramento they found a recently arrived Unadilla contingent which included Vincent Page, Rufus G. Mead, Charles Smith and Henry Wright. Lyman Birch of this party had remained behind at Panama, attracted by the prevalent high daily wages. He fell ill and had to return home. At the same time Edmund B. Birch, Lyman's brother, was making his way overland via Council Bluffs, Iowa.

The doctor would have established a hospital at Sacramento as a better prospect than gold digging, but was bound as physician to his company. When he passed through in May he could have bought lots at \$300. In the fall he found the same lots already sold at \$13,000. He left the mines in October and was back in Connecticut the day after Christmas, having suffered a most severe illness on the way and nearly losing his small hoard of gold dust.

The Jarvis party of eight, from Cooperstown, Fly Creek and Hartwick, left February 18, 1850. It proceeded with a lumber wagon, inscribed "Bound for California" and drawn by four horses, through Gilbertsville to Deposit, thence by the new Erie Railroad to New York City. There H. Monroe Hooker and Gideon Russell decided to go no further. The rest completed the whole journey in 88 days and,

like Doctor Halsey, found old friends. These were of the company from the Town of Otsego which had gone around the Horn the year before. Among them were Nelson Graves, . . . Lloyd, Robert McNamee, Dr. A. D. North, H. Osburn, Chauncey Pease, Ed. Robinson, John Russell, A. Ten Eyck, Thomas Williams and Reuben Wright. Members of the two groups then worked in cooperation.

Mr. Jarvis was away 14 months, half of them spent in travel. He had a net loss of \$200. Of the others, Lyman O. Hart was lured to the new gold fields of Australia in 1851 and became a lawyer at Melbourne there. Chester Babbitt accompanied him and after 15 months made his way home by London, completing a global circuit. Delos Eldred seems to have been the most fortunate. He brought back dust worth \$2,000. In 1859 he was off again for the new discovery at Pike's Peak and is said to have wished to try once more when the Klondike strike became known in the 1890's. Eleazer Bliss IV, alone of this group, made California his permanent home. His brother Norman had been there some time. He had become a Mormon and was likely one of the large number of that faith who went from New York to California in 1846.

In the summer of 1850 a party of up-staters attempted the arduous and dangerous passage by Tampico and Mazatlan, Mexico. Many died on this journey, including Amos Perry, of New Lisbon.

In spite of all the hazards the press continued.

OVERLAND travel to the California gold fields created its own severe handicap. The Oregon Trail had been in use for more than a decade and this could be followed a good part of the way. Lack of forage was the difficulty. So heavy was the travel that unless a caravan got under way early in the spring no food was left for the draft animals. These expeditions suffered appalling losses.

Neither was passage easy by the Isthmus of Panama. A railroad, projected in 1849, was not in operation until 1855. Meanwhile, any obtainable boat was rowed and poled up the stiff current of the Chagres River to Gorgona or Cruces, thence by trail the remaining distance, the gold seekers usually on foot, the baggage being carried by pack mules or native porters. Americans were astonished, as well they might be, at the individual porter's burden of 250 pounds and, thus loaded, accomplishing the 25 to 30 miles in a day and a half.

Still there were no better ways to the goal than these two and after 1849 Otsegoans chose them almost exclusively.

Alfred J. Smith was born in Oneida County, but eventually a druggist at Richfield Springs. He was in Kentucky in 1844 and Ohio in 1846, returning each time. In 1850 he spent four months on the overland trail. Like many others, he was long ill in California and accumulated no wealth. He returned via Nicaragua and did much better for himself at Richfield Springs.

Marvin W. Duley lived in several places in this county but likely was at Mt. Vision when his venture by way of Panama began in 1852. He, too, was plagued by ill health, returned, then tried out Ohio and Indiana. After some years as a miller at Hartwick, he settled down at Unadilla in 1866.

Chester L. Harrington left also in 1852 to engage as a merchant at San Francisco, then at Shasta, Cal. and Dallas, Oregon. His later days were spent more prosaically in keeping store in his native town of Hartwick.

The letters of Russell and Edward Loomis * well illustrate the whole California episode. They were two of the twelve children of Collins Loomis, of Richfield, and set out at the ages of eighteen and twenty-three. Arrived at Panama, Russell wrote back, "There is some danger in crossing this isthmus unless there is a party together. The natives are a savage, treacherous set and will kill a man any time for a few dollars if they can single him out."

The next letter came from the diggings and was somewhat more reassuring, "Have a tiny little purse of gold—enough to take us home or pay for mending a broken leg." Soon they took in three partners and Ed. wrote again, "We have settled down a plump little amount under two feet of dirt—directly under our fireplace. I think it will keep until spring."

Late in 1851 brother Dan sought advice about joining them. Russell replied frankly, saying that the climate was healthy but that "the miner must work in water the year round. Some become stiff in the joints and otherwise debilitated, but it has not affected us as yet. I suppose it is because we are of the lean, ganderlegged kind. . . . No one must come here with the expectation of making a fortune in one

* (The items from the letters of the Loomis brothers were kindly furnished by Janice C. Neal, of Oneonta.)

month or one year. . . . Our main dependence is to work old ground that has been once worked by a rocker and by using a sluice are enabled to make very good wages." Reflectively, he added, "I think the majority of those who have come to this country would have been better off if they had stayed at home."

By the spring of 1853 the brothers had practically abandoned mining. They had relocated in Colusa County, west of the Sacramento River and the important gold fields. They were selling hay and grain to immigrants, buying travel-worn cattle, fattening them and reselling at a handsome profit. Then they lost \$10,000, much of it hay, in a flash flood. They removed 60 miles north to Tehama, and well back from the river. There they raised hogs, horses and cattle. Late that fall Russell reported that their farm was doing well, and that they had four teams hauling hay sixty miles to Shasta, where it sold at \$100 a ton.

The last letter preserved was written by Ed. to his brother Hill in 1855. Ed. tells that the brothers were prospering, that towns were springing up all around their farm and that he had decided to make Tehama his permanent home. One important item was missing—a wife. We are left in the dark on the outcome.

We will stretch Otsego's claims a trifle to cover the two final examples. Isaac Cooper was a grandson of William, the Cooperstown pioneer, but he had started westward at the age of twenty and before the gold rush days. He tarried awhile at Toledo and Chicago before reaching Iowa in 1838. He went overland in 1849 with an ox-cart and developed the Cooper mine. Returning to Iowa, he was a Polk County citizen of consequence, but was again in California by 1873 and of equal prominence there until his death in 1902.

No career embraces more of the romance of the early West than that of Henry T. P. Comstock, "Old Pancake," from whom the fabulous Nevada "Comstock Lode" derived its name. Otsego's tenuous connection with him is only through his father Noah, who came early from Connecticut to Cooperstown, but had moved on before this son was born. "Mountain man," soldier in both the Black Hawk and the Mexican Wars, forty-niner, Henry sold his one-fourth interest in the famous Lode too soon and too low. His end came by a bullet in 1870 at Bozeman, Montana, but who fired the shot nobody knows.

RICHFIELD'S MINERAL SPRINGS

Adapted from a more complete account prepared by Mrs. Greta G. Hughes,
Historian for the Town of Richfield.

THROUGHOUT the ages the waters of mineral springs have been valued for the treatment of a host of ailments. American Indians appreciated their virtues. Innumerable such fountains occur in this state. One need only recall the word "Springs" appended to New York place names—not to go too far away—Ballston, Saratoga, Sharon. The usual evolution at such locations has been, first Indian knowledge and use, then development by physicians of a "water cure" and a final transition into a summer resort patronized by persons of means and fashion. So it was with the one-time highly esteemed mineral waters at Richfield Springs. Here the Iroquois came to treat frost bite and other afflictions. Here, as the location became readily accessible, were established baths for the ailing. Here, in a stimulating summer climate and amid enjoyable surroundings, arose vacation facilities for a century known far and wide.

To young and enterprising Dr. Horace Manley goes the credit for exploiting the local opportunity. He was already practicing at Monticello in 1817. In 1820 he acquired the site of the Great White Sulphur Spring. The Great Western Turnpike had been extended past the place in 1808 and East Richfield (now Richfield Springs) was displacing in importance the earlier settlements of the area. Doctor Manley erected a bath house and the first patients arrived in 1821, twenty-five of them. They were housed at the Richfield Hotel, existing since 1816. Greater accommodations were soon needed, which business men were quick to provide.

In 1823 Page's Tavern was built on the spring property. Frequently enlarged, it could care for 60 guests in 1840, and later, as the Spring House, an ultimate 450. Ready in 1830 was the American Hotel, in later days the Earlington. Burned in 1850, it was immediately rebuilt, added to, and had a final capacity of 450 also. A copious spring was discovered in its basement in 1865, making it an independent establishment. The National (Majestic) opened in 1852, presaging the change toward resort purposes. Harper's Magazine for June 1856

lists Richfield along with Chittenango, Saratoga and Sharon as the preferred fashionable watering places. However medical treatments long continued. In point is a quotation from a letter written by famous James Fenimore Cooper to his wife from the American on July 28, 1849, "I am very comfortably lodged here and much better off than when here before. I am not without hope that the water will do me good. I find the long, warm baths very penetrating, and think I shall benefit in the skin if not in the foot. . . . There must be near a hundred people here."

A comparison of early prices with those of the present is eye opening. Those first patients in 1821 paid \$1.25 for weekly board! At the Spring House in 1840 the similar charge was \$12, but reduced to a \$96 total for a twelve week stay. At the American this cost was \$20 to \$25 in 1871.

Stage coaches brought all the early visitors. As the Turnpike passed the site, such service was superior for the times. Steam trains reached Utica in 1836 and the horse drawn ride was then shortened to the trip from Herkimer. The Lackawana railroad spur came very near in 1870 and entered the village the next year. The two daily trains each way of that time became six in the 1890's and through parlor car service from New York was then provided. In 1902 an inter-urban electric line was running from Oneonta to Herkimer and hourly service was maintained for some years, but by then personal automobile transportation was on the horizon. This boded no good to resorts depending on long staying vacationists.

The lush days for Richfield Springs came with the railroad and these extended into this century. Many new hotels were then built, among them the Canaderoga, Central, Davenport, International and Washington Hall (Waiontha). In addition were numerous boarding houses, some of large capacity. Simultaneously in operation were 18 to 20 hosteries, capable of housing 2,000 guests. This was not too much. Often 3,000 visitors came during a season and these left half a million dollars in Richfield coffers annually.

Entertainment was provided for every taste. Carriage drives and horse back rides were leading features, some guests bringing their own liveried coachmen and conveyances. The daily coaching parade was a spectacle. A summer theatre was started in 1886, said to be the first at a

resort in the nation. Imported musicians gave symphony concerts daily. Each new type of recreation was introduced as it became popular —roller skating, tennis, cycling, golf. Of course, baseball, dancing and cards had their devotees.

The summer colony supported a whole series of publications. The Richfield News came out Sunday mornings from 1886 to 1897 and was succeeded briefly by Richfield Life. The Richfield Springs Daily began in 1888 and continued into this century. The Resorter, a Utica monthly, gave good local coverage.

The roster of guests over the years reads like a list of the nation's greats in varied fields. General George B. McClelland, Admiral George Dewey, James G. Blaine, Thomas A. Edison, Walter Damrosch, even Ward McAllister, dictator to New York's social "Four Hundred," were among them. Latin-America sent its contingents, over a hundred eminent Cubans were at the Waiontha in 1919.

The Spring House burned in 1897 and was not rebuilt, notice that an era was passing for Richfield Springs and for watering places in general. Visitors came in decreasing numbers until the depression of the 1930's. The hostelries have now been mostly razed and replaced by filling stations, a commentary in itself. Advances in medical science, changing social patterns and particularly the opportunities opened by the automobile provide the explanation. The use of Richfield's mineral waters now belongs to our county's cherished history.

OTSEGO COUNTY MISCELLANY

THE intent of this article is to salute some high lights in Otsego County history, but to make each mention comparatively brief, as most of the topics have been previously treated to some extent in print. However the various topics here presented should not be entirely neglected in this Year of History and we would not wish any reader to think that we are not constantly aware of them.

The County

Otsego County was erected in 1791 with its county seat at Cooperstown. It covers 1,013 miles, or 648,320 acres, so in area it ranks 17th among the 62 counties of the state. Since it has a rural location with none of the large cities or industries, in population it stands much further down the list, being 38th in order. This has been by no means always so. According to a late census 85% of the state's residents have urban, and 15%, rural dwellings. A century and a half ago, this was just the other way around. Then Otsego, with nearly the same number of people as now, was one of the most populous counties of the state. It ranked 10th in 1810, topping every one of the counties which now contain the largest upstate cities, namely, Utica, Albany, Syracuse, Troy, Rochester, Buffalo, and Schenectady. Oneida County went ahead of Otsego in 1820, Albany and Onondaga in 1830, Rensselaer, Monroe and Erie in 1840, but Schenectady not until 1910. Otsego was allotted one assemblyman at its formation, but grew so rapidly that it had five in 1795, and never less than four for the next 40 years. By then the cityward movement was well under way and Otsego's relative position dropped. Three was its assembly representation from 1836 to 1857, then two until 1893, when this became one as at present.

White Men Come To Stay

The first settlement was made at Cherry Valley in 1741 by a company of Scotch-Irish from Londonderry, New Hampshire. It is an interesting example—and the only one in present Otsego—of the New

England practice of establishing a near self-sufficient community by persons professing a common religious faith and under the leadership of their pastor. (Elsewhere the American frontier was most commonly penetrated by individual families, often of diverse denominations, so religious societies could not well be organized until more settlers came with the elapsing years.) From the Cherry Valley center several other early settlements were made, as in Newton-Martin (Middlefield), Milford and at Harpersfield and Sidney Plains, both now in Delaware County.

In the Wars

Until the end of the Revolution the struggling Otsego settlements were frequently in danger of invasion. During the French and Indian War threats came from both north and south, causing many residents to seek protection at Albany and missionaries to withdraw from their stations down the Susquehanna. The nearest a hostile force actually came was the one which destroyed the settlement at German Flats (Herkimer). Immediately following British success in this war the formidable conspiracy of western Indians led by Pontiac affected the Delawares of Pennsylvania and the Senecas of western New York. At least three successful punitive expeditions were sent down the Susquehanna in 1764 to meet each recurrence of the threat. Except for numbers involved, all these much resembled the later Sullivan campaign. It is of interest that throughout this period the Oquaga Indian mission school was transferred to the shore of Otsego Lake, exactly where does not appear.

When the Revolution broke out, local supporters promptly took the necessary first steps for its prosecution. A Tryon County Committee of Safety was organized in May 1775. Among its members were John Moore, Samuel Campbell and Samuel Clyde, all of Cherry Valley. That may have been also the home of another—Thomas Henry. Correspondence was held with other localities, the measures taken by the Continental Congress were approved. Representatives were sent to the provincial congresses, which were administering an ad interim government. John Moore and William Harper were two of them. The line was drawn between patriot and loyalist. Some dangerous British

partisans were expelled and a strict watch kept upon professed neutrals. Colonel Clyde was elected to the first Assembly held under the new 1777 state constitution. The Indians were quiet for a time, but the Iroquois were mostly won over to the British cause in time for them to participate in the St. Leger-Burgoyne invasion from Canada in 1777. From then through 1781 this utmost New York frontier was the scene of almost constant military activity. Main Otsego incidents were the conference of General Herkimer and Brant (both accompanied by considerable armed forces) at Unadilla in the summer of 1777, the Tory and Indian raids and massacres at Springfield June 18, 1778 and at Cherry Valley on November 11 following and the encampment of General James Clinton's brigade at the foot of Otsego Lake from June 17 to August 8, 1779, while waiting to join in the retaliatory expedition against the western Indians. All these and their enemies used the Susquehanna-Finger Lakes route.

Space is lacking in this resume to recount the many war experiences of families and the exploits of small armed bands and scouts in this area. 1781 witnessed the end of fighting here and two years later came formal peace. Soon survivors of patriot pioneer families returned to their former homes, but the Unadilla did not mark the New York frontier. The Iroquois lost their prestige and power through defeat of their British allies and the land to the west was opened to the citizens of the new republic.

Otsego County has borne a full and honorable part in five international, and one civil, wars since but opposed forces have never again met within its borders.

William Cooper and Son

In the fall of 1785 William Cooper came from Burlington, N. J. for his first view of the Otsego Country. With financial backing from his home town, he had already acquired an interest here through purchase of a judgment against foreclosed mortgaged lands formerly belonging to George Croghan. Title was secured the following January and sales to settlers began in the spring. Cooper shrewdly and successfully fostered his infant settlement, soon bought other tracts, acted as agent for many non-resident owners and became the leading business

and political figure in all the surrounding area. When he moved his family permanently to Cooperstown in 1790, along came young son James, whose later writings have made him ever since the most widely known of all Otsego residents.

The Otsego Herald

A PIONEER newspaper, *The Otsego Herald*, began weekly publication at Cooperstown in 1795. It was maintained until 1821, but had long had competition in its own home town. In 1808 *The Impartial Observer* appeared. Shortly the name was change to *The Cooperstown Federalist*, but the original name was restored in 1810 and used until 1818, when today's designation—*The Freeman's Journal*—was adopted for the same paper. So *The Journal* became 150 years last year, an age which few American newspapers have managed to attain. It does not show its age. Otsego's first and only regular daily—*The Oneonta Star*—was established in 1890.

Manufacturers

Otsego's hilly terrain insured swiftly flowing streams and abundance of water power. In the days when this power was the prime mover and small industries the rule, much manufacturing was done. Linseed oil, hand agricultural tools or anything requiring wood, tin pails, cottage organs are a few of many examples. Larger establishments were paper making and book publishing. Most extensive was cotton manufacture. This activity began at Toddsville in 1806, but at least nine other plants of the type have existed in various parts of the county.

On the Farm

The earliest phase of agriculture was one of self-sufficiency, the farmer producing for himself every necessity that conditions permitted, but with some surplus to barter or sell for those needed articles which neither Nature nor his own labor could provide here.

Dairying has always been a leading factor. A London publication

of 1795 stated that the best cheese in New York was being made "on the borders of Oaks Creek." Cheese making was long a domestic industry and many a farm had its separate cheese house. In the 1850's cheese factories began to appear and before New York City absorbed the local milk supply this convenience was not far from any farm. In the county 1,650,000 pounds of cheese were made in 1864 and over three million pounds of butter.

New York led the nation in beef production until the 1850's. Hundreds of horned cattle were driven to Philadelphia each fall in the 1790's, later over the turnpikes also to Albany and New York City. In 1840 Otsego was New York's top county in sheep and wool and ranked very high in hemp and flax, potatoes and apples, honey and beeswax. How many persons now recall that beeswax was once a household staple? General farming continued to be the rule until the end of the last century, but two Otsego specialties deserve separate mention.

Maple products. Before 1790 a national movement began to replace cane sugar made by West Indian slave labor with that from the American maple. The project received the enthusiastic support of all classes of influential men and the rapidly growing Otsego Country was considered the best source of supply. Not only hard sugar, for better keeping and shipping, was advocated but also maple beer, spirits, vinegar and "molasses," as the syrup was then called. This patriotic scheme lost momentum after Louisiana was acquired in 1803. There cane sugar could be made on American soil. However, a long and fascinating story of Otsego sugar maples could be written, extending it down to the present day. The crest in production, both for the county and for the state, was attained in 1860, but recourse to this sweetening has since been stressed in every time of war. Thus in 1865 Otsego produced a half million pounds of maple sugar and led the state in the marketing of maple syrup. Vermont is commonly regarded as the banner state for these products, but in World War I, New York, with its greater area surpassed Vermont, as it had before and during the Civil War.

Hops. Hop culture vanished in this state forty years ago but vivid memories of it remain among our people. This crop is said to have been first commercially grown here in "the 12,000" in 1823. Before 1840 Otsego had become the premier county in the premier state for

the product. Those attending the 1846 meeting of the American Agricultural Association heard that "the climate of New York is peculiarly favorable to their perfection, and the hops of this state are acknowledged by brewers of all countries to be very superior and they command twenty per cent more in the market than any other hops. The county of Otsego is celebrated for the excellence of its hops; they are probably the best that are grown." Otsego remained in first place until 1875. Thereafter, the yield gradually dwindled and ceased with the adoption of The Prohibition amendment in 1919.

The Dominie's School

Hartwick Seminary, the first Lutheran divinity school in America and the second such institution for any denomination in this state, opened its doors in 1815. Housed under one roof were an old-line academy, a department equivalent to a junior college of today and a theological school. In line with advancing educational trends, the collegiate department in 1928 became Hartwick College and was relocated at Oneonta. With free public schools, High and Centralized arising all around, the academy closed in 1934. The divinity school was removed to New York City in 1930 and ceased operations in 1940. During the long lives of the discontinued portions of the institution they were a mighty force in the cultural life of the county.

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO, IN 1859

IN THE final chapter in this series a look will be taken at some conditions and events pertinent to Otsego a century or so ago. Some contrast interestingly with those of the present.

According to the most recent census the population of the county was then 49,735, almost as large as now, but a much larger proportion was living on farms. Cooperstown, Cherry Valley and Unadilla, in that order, were the largest incorporated places. Oneonta, which now houses more than a quarter of the county's people, was in fourth place with 678 inhabitants.

Considerable manufacturing was being carried on, but mostly for local consumption and by small concerns. Included were 142 sawmills, 37 grist-mills, and 26 tanneries. The latter provided leather for 54 boot and shoe shops and 20 harness shops. Sixty-six establishments were devoted to blacksmithing, 55 to wagon making and 17 to coopering. Seven cotton mills, employing 300 hands—men, women and small children—constituted the largest industry.

The year 1859 opened here with a first-class murder. Patrick McNamara, of Richfield Springs, celebrated a holiday weekend with two friends, then went to work the next morning. The friends consumed more whiskey, grossly insulted Mrs. McNamara and left. When Pat came home, he heard the tale, became enraged, but instead of seeking the offenders, slew his wife with a club. The following June he received a life sentence, but was pardoned before death.

At the time Otsego was the leading national hop producing area. Throughout the year the weekly papers carried market quotations, crop prospects and news of the hop situation overseas.

It was also a railroad building period. The Albany & Susquehanna (now Delaware & Hudson) had begun construction from the eastward some years earlier, but lacked capital to continue. Application was made to the 1859 legislature for state assistance. \$200,000 was appropriated, but the bill was vetoed by the govevrnor late in the year and not until 1865 did the tracks reach Oneonta.

A horse railroad from Cherry Valley to Canajoharie was being

also strongly advocated. Opponents felt that the cost of it could be better spent on a "McAdam" road.

Unadilla residents were urging the use of "steam carriages" over existing roads to Fort Plain. Supporters conceded that no tracks were likely to be laid that way, but thought the United States backward in not following the example of England, South America, India and Australia in trying traction engines for transport, thus doubling the speed of six miles an hour possible for horses.

The "hoop skirt" was all the fashion and occasioned as much comment and caricature as the "hobble skirt" of a much later day. One New York City factory was employing a thousand girls, using 300,000 yards of steel spring wire and 150,000 yards of tape a week and turning out 3,000 skirts a day. Harper's Weekly commented, "Smart girls, we are told, can easily make \$4 a week. . . . Four dollars a week, it need hardly be remarked, is very fair remuneration for work which is neither excessive or unhealthy."

The Mount Vernon Association was beginning to solicit public subscriptions for the purchase of George Washington's home. The Otsego committee in charge reported in February \$381.25 received for the cause.

In June a panther was sighted on the east side of Otego Creek one mile below Laurens, possibly the last recorded instance of this animal in the county.

On the Fourth of July a Burlington Flats resident recalled that exactly fifty years before he had returned from a Sunday School picnic at the "Green" through a driving snow storm.

During several previous years mowing machines were being perfected and now several models were on the market. A competition among them was held at Cooperstown in July. All but one worked satisfactorily. This device proved its value when a man power shortage came soon with the Civil War.

James Markham, a Revolutionary soldier, died at Richfield Springs on August 4th at the age of 96. Did the county have a later survivor of that struggle?

When in August oil was struck by drilling near Titusville, Pa., the modern petroleum age began. Before the end of the year kerosene was for sale in local stores at \$1.25 a gallon.

The Hyde Park Methodist Church dedicated its building in October. The edifice cost \$1,000!

Jared Gardner, of New Lisbon, retired in November after having ridden weekly for 14 years a 70-mile route to deliver local newspapers in the western part of the county. He was 79.

This was the year the Colorado potato beetle appeared here—and to stay. A Yankee had patented copper-toed boots and Otsegoans demanded that these be stocked here. Whisky could be bought for twenty-five cents a gallon. Venison, bear meat, wild turkeys and wild pigeons were displayed in the markets.

Erastus F. Beadle, a printer and a native of Pierstown, published at New York City "The Dime Song Book." Its popularity gave him an idea. The next year the Beadle Dime Novels began to appear, selling in huge editions, furnishing an outlet for many writers and inspiring a rash of imitators.

The new Republican party was rapidly gathering strength. In December 1859 Abraham Lincoln consented that his friends might advance his candidacy as the Presidential nominee of the party. The result was that the first President born beyond the Appalachians entered the White House in 1861. Among the most stanch and effective of his supporters was the eminent lawyer, Isaac N. Arnold, who had left Otsego County for Chicago some thirty years before.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Some sources for the study of the Otsego area—Compiled by Roy L. Butterfield

BACON, Edwin F.

Otsego County, Geographical and Historical—Oneonta—1902 (Brief, some errors, limited value)

BARTHEL, Otto

New Century Atlas of Otsego County—Philadelphia—1903

BEARDSLEY, Levi

Reminiscences—Charles Vinten—Albany 1852 (Excellent on early social conditions)

BEERS, F. W.

Atlas of Otsego County—New York—1868 (Shows early school district boundaries)

BIRDSALL, RALPH

Story of Cooperstown, revised—Augur's Book Store, Cooperstown—1948

CHILD, Hamilton, ed.

Otsego County Directory, 1872-3—Syracuse Journal—1872

COOK, Frederick

General Sullivan's Indian Expedition—Auburn—1887

COOPER, James Fenimore

(the novelist)

Chronicles of Cooperstown—H. & E. Phinney—Cooperstown—1838 (Reissued with additions by S. M. Shaw and Walter Littell in 1929 as *History of Cooperstown* by The Freeman's Journal)

COOPER, James Fenimore

(the lawyer)

Legends and Traditions of a Northern County—Freeman's Journal—Cooperstown—1920 and 1936

COOPER, Susan

Rural Hours—Willis P. Hazard—Philadelphia—1854—A journal of Cooperstown area in 1848, with observations on its history, inhabitants, occupations, wild life, etc.

COOPER, William

Guide in the Wilderness—reprinted—Freeman's Journal—1936 (unsurpassed for description of early conditions)

ELLIS, David M.

Landlords and Farmers in the Hudson-Mohawk Region—Cornell University Press—1946

FOX, Edith M.

Land Speculation in the Mohawk Valley—Cornell University Press—1949

- FROST, James A.
Life On The Upper Susquehanna, 1783-1860, King's Crown Press—New York—1951 (contains excellent bibliography)
- FRENCH, J. H.
Gazetteer of the State of New York—R. Pearsall Smith—Syracuse—1860 (Revised in 1872 by F. B. Hough to include Civil War Data. Other gazetteers include Spafford, 1813, and 1824, Gordon, 1836, J. Disturnell, 1842, and Barber & Howe's Historical Collections, 1845)
- HALSEY, F. W.
Old New York Frontier 1614-1800—Scribner—New York—1901 (Best early local history)
- HALSEY, F. W., ed.
Tour of Four Great Rivers—Scribner—New York (1906) (Journal of Richard Smith, Burlington, N. J., during a trip on the Hudson, Mohawk, Susquehanna and Delaware Rivers)
- HAMMOND, J. B.
History of Political Parties in the State of New York—H. & E. Phinney—Cooperstown—1846
- HASTINGS, Hugh, ed.
Military Records of the Council of Appointment 1783-1821—J. B. Lyon—Albany—1901 (Useful for commissions in the militia to which all able-bodied men belonged)
- HEDRICK, Ulysses P.
History of Agriculture in the State of New York—Albany—1933
- HIGGINS, Ruth E.
Expansion in New York—Ohio State University—Columbus—1931
- HOUGH, F. B.
Census of the State of New York 1855—Albany—1857 (Detailed census reports for 1865 and 1875 also published)
- HUNTINGTON, W. V.
Old Time Notes (an unpublished manuscript chronology of the area from the earliest times to 1865, owned by the Upper Susquehanna Historical Society, housed at the Huntington Library, Oneonta. Copy at N. Y. S. Historical Assoc'n)
- HURD, D. Hamilton
History of Otsego County—Everts & Farris—Philadelphia—1878 (Like most subscription county histories of the period, this is heavily weighted in favor of resident subscribers and their families, but data included has value)
- LINCKLAEN, John
Journals of Travels in 1791 and 1792 as agent of the Holland Land Company, edited by Helen Fairchild—Putnam—New York—1897
- (VARIOUS EDITORS)
New York Civil List (issued annually many years, contains an excellent constitutional history of the state and lists colonial, state and county officers down to year of publication)

VOLWILER, A.T.

George Croghan and the Westward Movement—Arthur H. Clark & Co.—Cleveland—1926 (Much on the local operations of the largest land holder in Otsego's early days)

WILLIAMS, Edgar

New York Annual Register (various dates)

WRIGHT, Henry C.

Human Life (Autobiography) —Bela Marsh—Boston—1849 (very scarce, it gives an excellent picture of pioneer life)

No author stated

Otsego County Biographical Review—Boston—1898—(the same stricture applies as to Hurd's *History*)

As a useful guide the following title should be added:

JOSEPHSON, Bertha E.

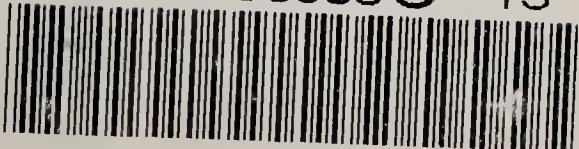
Donald Dean Parker: *Local History, how to gather it, write it and publish it.*
Social Science Research Council—New York—1944

Nearly all these titles can be found in the library of the New York State Historical Association at Cooperstown, many will be in other local libraries.

4/21/2017

G

398588 5 13



00

HF GROUP - IN

